

Relaxed Breath

Sometimes people try to control or stop stuttering by breathing in ways that actually mess their speech up even more. When they're talking, they do things like hold their breath, take a quick breath, take a breath that's too small, or squeeze out their breath.

Unfortunately, doing stuff like that tends to tighten things up and make the stuttering worse.

If you can breathe in a more relaxed way when you're talking, it really helps your speech to flow out more easily.

Using a *Relaxed Breath* allows you to start your speech easily and keep it going without tension or stuttering. It also gives you a good base to work from as you learn and use other fluency strategies.



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How to take a Relaxed Breath:

1. First, sit up straight and a bit forward, without leaning against the back of your chair. The position of your feet and your shins, and your thighs and your back, should create two "L's."
2. Take a minute to relax your upper body. Gently roll your head and shrug your shoulders.

3. Then, put your hand on your stomach and take a slow *Relaxed Breath* through your mouth and/or nose. Feel how your stomach moves as you breathe slowly.
4. As you breathe in, your stomach will move **outward**. As you breathe out, your stomach will move **inward**.

Imagine that you're breathing in through your belly button and filling up your stomach like a balloon. When you exhale, imagine that air is flowing out of the balloon very slowly.

5. Continue this relaxed breathing for a while. Watch your breath and just see what it feels like.

Notice how, as you come to the top of your breath, your inhalation **turns itself** into a relaxed exhalation. There's no stopping or holding the breath between inhalation and exhalation.

How to put your Relaxed Breath together with voice:

1. Establish your *Relaxed Breath* once again and watch it for a minute.
2. Then, when you come to the top of your breath, make a very soft humming sound ("mmmm") as you begin to exhale. Keep your breathing continuous and start your exhalation and humming at the same time.
3. Hum gently in this way four or five times as you're exhaling.

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4. Next, make that very soft “mmmm” sound as you begin to exhale and then slowly and gently open your mouth. Let the “mmmm” turn into an “aaahh.” You’ll be saying “mmmmaaahh.”
5. Be sure to stop making sound when it’s comfortable for you. There’s no need to push or squeeze air out of your lungs.
6. Say “mmmmaaahh” in this slow, relaxed way four or five times.

If you breathe from up high in your chest, it can create tension in your neck and voice box. When you breathe easily from down low, it relaxes your whole speech system and helps your words to come out more easily.

This *Relaxed Breath* “sets the stage” for relaxed, smooth speech. You’re going to use this kind of breathing as you say sounds, syllables, words, phrases, and sentences. At first you’ll practice it in a very slow way. Later on, you’ll learn to use a *Relaxed Breath* more quickly.

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